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Progress report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 1320 (2000) of 15 September 2000, in which the Council requested me, inter alia, to keep it closely and regularly informed of progress towards the implementation of the resolution. The report provides an update on political and humanitarian developments since my report of 18 September 2000 (S/2000/879). It also describes the status of deployment of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) as authorized by the Security Council in resolutions 1312 (2000) of 31 July 2000 and 1320 (2000) of 15 September 2000.

II. Political developments

2. As part of a trip to several African countries, I visited Ethiopia and Eritrea from 5 to 9 December 2000, accompanied by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs. While in Addis Ababa, I met Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin and other senior government officials, as well as the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim. I took part in the Africa Development Forum 2000, which focused on the problem of HIV/AIDS in Africa, and visited two United Nations-supported development projects that provide much-needed social services to people living with the disease. In Asmara, I met President Isaias Afwerki, Foreign Minister Ali Said Abdella and other senior government officials. I visited the UNMEE military team site in the town of Adi Keyh, and met with newly deployed United Nations troops at Dek'emhare.

Agreement of 12 December 2000

3. As indicated in my briefing of 15 December 2000 to the Security Council, on 12 December 2000, I witnessed the signing of the Agreement between the Government of the State of Eritrea and the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (A/55/686-S/2000/1183), at a ceremony hosted by President Bouteflika in Algiers. Also in attendance were the United States Secretary of State, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, the Secretary-General of the OAU, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the Representative of the President of the United States of America, Mr. Anthony Lake, and the Personal Envoy of the President of the European Union, Mr. Rino Serri. In welcoming the Agreement, I stated that it reflected the collective will of the leaders and Governments of both countries to set aside a destructive dispute, and to turn their energies and abilities to advancing the shared needs of both their peoples. I paid a tribute to the tireless efforts of the OAU and its Secretary-General, and particularly to those of President Bouteflika of Algeria, in bringing the proximity talks to a successful conclusion. I also expressed my appreciation to Mr. Lake and Mr. Serri.

4. In my letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 14 December 2000 (S/2000/1194), I stressed that the signing of the Agreement marked an important victory for peace between the two countries and a major achievement for the African continent as a whole. The Agreement provides that the two parties shall permanently terminate military hostilities between themselves, shall refrain from the threat or use

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of force against each other, and shall respect and fully implement the provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities of 18 June 2000 (S/2000/601, annex). The 12 December Agreement also provides for the early release and repatriation of prisoners of war and all other persons detained as a result of the armed conflict. At the same time, the text calls for an investigation to be conducted by an independent and impartial body to determine the origins of the conflict. The Agreement further envisages the establishment, as described in paragraphs 5 and 6 below of a neutral boundary commission which is mandated to delimit and demarcate the colonial treaty border based on pertinent colonial treaties and applicable international law. In addition, the Agreement further provides for the establishment of a neutral commission to decide on all claims for loss, damage or injury from either side.

5. In its resolution 1320 (2000), the Security Council emphasized that the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities links the termination of the peacekeeping mission to the completion of the process of delimitation and demarcation of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border, and requested me to provide regular updates on the status of this issue. By agreeing to the establishment of a neutral boundary commission, as provided in the 12 December Agreement, the parties took a very important step towards the delimitation and demarcation of their common border.

6. It should be noted that the 12 December Agreement sets strict deadlines for the establishment and the functioning of the Boundary Commission. Each party must appoint, by written notification to me, two commissioners within 45 days from the effective date of the Agreement, and the President of the Commission is to be selected by these commissioners within 30 days of the date of appointment of the last party-appointed commissioner. In the event that these deadlines are not met, the parties will request that I make the necessary appointments. Under the Agreement, "the United Nations Cartographer" is expected to serve as Secretary to the Commission and each party must provide to the Secretary its claims and evidence relevant to the mandate of the Commission within 45 days after the signing of the Agreement. The Commission is expected to commence its work not more than 15 days after it is constituted and shall endeavour to make its decision concerning delimitation of the border within six months of its first meeting, following which it shall arrange for expeditious demarcation of the border. Accordingly, I urge both parties to comply with these deadlines.

III. Status of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

7. In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 29 September 2000 (S/2000/947), I informed the Council of my decision to appoint Mr. Legwaila Joseph Legwaila (Botswana) as my Special Representative for Ethiopia and Eritrea. Upon his arrival in the Mission area in early-November, my Special Representative began a series of meetings with the government authorities and representatives of the diplomatic community in both countries, as well as the OAU. My Special Representative paid a courtesy visit to President Bouteflika in Algiers in November, and also accompanied me there to attend the signing ceremony of the 12 December Agreement. He also undertook field visits to UNMEE sector headquarters and military team sites on both sides of the border.

8. My Special Representative and the Force Commander of UNMEE, Major-General Patrick C. Cammaert (Netherlands), who assumed his functions on 1 November 2000, travel regularly between the two UNMEE offices in Asmara and Addis Ababa, so as to maintain close contacts with the two parties and the OAU. Mr. Legwaila has been joined by the two Deputy Special Representatives, Mr. Ian Martin and Mr. Cheikh-Tidiane Gaye, who are serving their duties in Asmara and Addis Ababa, respectively.

Deployment of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea

9. As at 11 January 2001, the strength of the military component of UNMEE stood at 3,432 military personnel from over 35 countries, including 153 military observers as well as national support elements. With the continued cooperation of both Governments, UNMEE expects to be fully deployed and operational by the end of February 2001, with a total strength of 4,200 troops, including 220 military observers, as authorized by Security Council resolution 1320 (2000).

10. The staffing of the Force Headquarters of UNMEE is nearly complete. Two battalions and most of the Force support units are fully deployed, with the Dutch/Canadian battalion present in the central sector, and the Jordanian battalion in the western sector. In the

eastern sector, an advance party of the Kenyan battalion is about to deploy, while its main body is expected to be inducted in February 2001. Force units, including an aviation unit from Italy, a demining engineering unit from Slovakia and a guard and administrative unit from Denmark are fully operational. A level-II hospital from Jordan is being established. A military police company from Italy is currently deploying. The force reserve and construction engineering companies from India are expected to deploy by the end of January 2001, and an engineering company from Bangladesh is expected to arrive in the coming month.

11. In carrying out their activities, the United Nations military observers continue to liaise with the parties at the Headquarters and field levels, and meet regularly with their counterparts in both countries in the respective Commissions for Coordination with the Mission and in the field. The military observers investigate complaints received from the parties, which helps to build confidence.

12. As at 11 January 2001, there were 128 international and 66 national staff members in place. To date, the Mission has received a substantial number of authorized vehicles. Its air assets include one small jet aircraft, six medium-range helicopters and one transport plane. The Government of Italy has provided UNMEE with additional air assets, which are indispensable for the conduct of the operations. UNMEE reported that the deployment operation by sea and air had proceeded thus far in a very efficient manner. In this regard, I should like to express my appreciation to local authorities for the assistance provided to UNMEE at the Port of Massawa, which allowed its deployment to proceed without undue impact on the very busy port traffic, and also to the World Food Programme.

13. I should like to thank the countries participating in the Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) arrangement, as well as the other troop-contributing countries, for their prompt and generous commitments, which allowed a quick and efficient deployment of the Force. I am also gratified at the high level of cooperation and responsiveness of troop-contributing countries in providing, on a temporary basis, movement control specialists to undertake deployment tasks hand in hand with UNMEE. It should be noted that this is the first time that such a joint venture has been achieved during a deployment phase, and valuable experience has been gained for future operations. In the area of procurement, a number of contracts for office accommodation and fuel, both for ground and aviation transport, are in place. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of the United Nations, few accommodation sites have been identified by either Government for use free of charge. This has in some cases delayed the ability of UNMEE forces to deploy to final locations. I therefore call upon the parties to facilitate the provision of suitable premises and sites for UNMEE in an expeditious manner.

Military Coordination Commission

14. The first meeting of the Military Coordination Commission (MCC), established in accordance with the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities of 18 June 2000, was held at Nairobi on 2 December 2000 under the chairmanship of the Force Commander of UNMEE, with the participation of representatives of the two parties and of the OAU. In his opening statement, my Special Representative reminded the parties that the peace process was gathering momentum and that they had an obligation to contribute to it. He also underscored the importance of granting to UNMEE unimpeded land and air access and freedom of movement to facilitate the work of the Mission and of the MCC. The parties were invited to consider the possibility of the MCC holding alternate meetings in Addis Ababa and Asmara.

15. At the 2 December 2000 meeting, the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities confirmed their prior agreement to open two additional land access routes on 7 December 2000, following the opening of the first such route on 28 November, to enable UNMEE convoys to cross the frontlines in all of its three deployment sectors. The parties also agreed to submit to the Force Commander their redeployment plans by 12 December 2000, and to provide UNMEE by 14 December with information on known and suspected minefields. The Mission has received some information from Ethiopia and is awaiting a response from Eritrea. There was also an agreement on the modalities for the removal of bodies of those killed in action on the Manda-Assab road. As planned, 20 bodies were recovered on that road and returned in solemn ceremonies held on 6 and 14 December.

16. The MCC reconvened at Nairobi on 28 December 2000. At this second meeting, both parties agreed to the development of protocols to improve the freedom

of movement of UNMEE fixed-wing and rotary aircraft in the Mission area. There was also an understanding on the need to develop full transparency of all relevant information on known and suspected minefields, in order to reduce the risk to UNMEE peacekeepers deployed in the area.

17. However, the parties could not reach an agreement on the redeployment of Ethiopian forces and repositioning of Eritrean forces, and maintained differing views over which areas were or were not under Ethiopian administration before 6 May 1998. The MCC decided therefore that the matter be referred to my Special Representative, who is currently actively pursuing it. In this connection, it will be recalled that the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities required Ethiopia to submit to the peacekeeping mission redeployment plans for its troops from positions taken after 6 February 1999 which were not under Ethiopian administration before 6 May 1998. It also requires Eritrea to maintain its forces at a distance of 25 kilometres from positions to which the Ethiopian forces are to redeploy. Ethiopia submitted its redeployment plans to UNMEE on 12 December 2000.

18. In the meantime, cross-border land access routes were opened in all three sectors of the Mission's operation, and the UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre organized the clearance of mines and unexploded ordnance from these routes prior to their opening. The first land access route was opened on 28 November 2000, from Adi Keyh in Eritrea to Adigrat in Ethiopia (central sector). Two additional land routes were opened on 7 December, from Assab to Manda (eastern sector) and from Shambiko to Shiraro (western sector). A fourth land route was opened from Om Hajer to Humera (western sector) on 26 December, and a fifth land route between Adi Quala and Rama (central sector) was opened on 8 January 2001. The opening of these land access routes has increased the freedom of movement for UNMEE peacekeepers and paves the way for their deployment in the future Temporary Security Zone.

19. The parties have also granted authorization for the use by UNMEE of low-level air routes over these land routes, to increase the Mission's access to its team sites on both sides of the border. This improves the timely delivery of supplies, and is also essential for medical evacuation purposes. The important issue of direct flights between Addis Ababa and Asmara has been resolved, and they are expected to begin on 15 January 2001. These direct flights between the two capitals will enhance the operational and logistical capabilities of UNMEE and reduce the safety risks to its personnel. I wish, therefore, to thank both Governments for heeding my appeal to authorize such flights.

20. Although several incidents occurred during the reporting period, which involved small exchanges of fire between Eritrean and Ethiopian forces on or near their frontlines, causing casualties in a few cases, investigations conducted by UNMEE have led to the conclusion that these did not constitute deliberate breaches of the ceasefire by either side. These incidents do point, however, to the importance of establishing the Temporary Security Zone at the earliest possible date.

Status-of-forces agreements

21. Revised draft status-of-forces agreements, including amendments received from the two Governments, were submitted by the Secretariat to the Permanent Representatives of Ethiopia and of Eritrea on 1 November and 1 December 2000, respectively. While both Governments have reiterated their commitments to sign the agreements with the United Nations as soon as possible, including during my recent visit to Addis Ababa and Asmara, these agreements have still not been concluded. I therefore wish to reiterate my call to both parties to conclude without further delay the status-of-forces agreements which, as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1320 (2000), should have been concluded by 15 October 2000.

Public information

22. As UNMEE continues to deploy (see paras. 9 to 13 above), its Public Information Office is expanding its outreach and coverage, from both Asmara and Addis Ababa.

23. Substantive progress has been achieved in the negotiations with the broadcast authorities of both countries to provide free airtime for UNMEE-produced radio programmes. Initially, UNMEE will produce one hour per week of news and features in English, as well as in local languages, in both countries. Additional hours are expected to be provided as the Mission's capacity to produce more radio material increases. UNMEE may be able to launch its radio broadcasts in the course of January 2001. The Office has also

prepared a series of public service announcements in the above-mentioned languages for broadcast on radio and television.

IV. Mine action

24. The presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance in the future Temporary Security Zone and areas adjacent to it is a threat not only to UNMEE personnel but also to the populations concerned. The Mission frequently receives reports of land mine explosions on both sides of the border.

25. To better coordinate mine action activities, UNMEE is establishing a mine-action priority-setting coordination group at the UNMEE Asmara office, chaired by the Deputy Special Representative. The UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre will provide the coordination group with secretariat functions and expert advice, and supervise the implementation of mine action based on the group's decisions and recommendations.

26. The signing of the 12 December Agreement has created great expectations among internally displaced persons. The possibility of spontaneous movements of internally displaced persons anxious to return to their homes and lands, before demining can be undertaken and the Mine Action Coordination Centre is able to declare those areas safe, is a source of major concern. UNMEE and the Humanitarian Coordinator have begun discussions with the Eritrean authorities regarding the planned return of their administration to the future Temporary Security Zone and the need to inform internally displaced persons about the dangers of premature returns to some of their villages, especially those located close to former frontlines. There is also an urgent need to sensitize internally displaced persons and returnees to mine awareness, through a public education programme supported by the United Nations Children's Fund and the Mine Action Coordination Centre.

V. Humanitarian developments

27. On 18 December 2000, shortly after my visit to the Mission area, I wrote to the President of Eritrea and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, urging that the commitments made in the 12 December Agreement be carried out fully and without delay, to release the prisoners of war, detainees and internees, and to ensure the humane treatment of each other's nationals within their respective territories. I noted that those who are at risk of statelessness, as a result of forced displacements between the two countries, need to have their status resolved in accordance with relevant international principles. I expressed confidence that in the fulfilment of these commitments, both Governments would work closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and with the human rights unit of UNMEE.

28. On 28 November 2000, 836 persons of Ethiopian origin were repatriated from Eritrea with the assistance of ICRC. Further operations were conducted under ICRC auspices in December 2000, for the repatriation of over 3,500 Ethiopian civilians. On 23 and 24 December, following announcements by both Governments that they would begin releasing prisoners of war, ICRC undertook the first repatriation of 360 Ethiopian and 359 Eritrean soldiers, among the sick and seriously wounded. The aircraft transporting the freed soldiers was allowed direct air access between Addis Ababa and Asmara. On 6 January 2001, over 950 persons of Eritrean origin were repatriated from Ethiopia with the assistance of ICRC. I commend both parties for the cooperation and commitment shown to the Agreement in this respect, and call upon them to allow the release of all remaining prisoners of war and other detainees.

29. Currently, key humanitarian priorities include access to vulnerable populations following the establishment of the Temporary Security Zone, as well as the safe and coordinated resettlement of populations who were displaced from Temporary Security Zone areas as a result of the conflict. However, this can be achieved only if the threat of mines and unexploded ordnance is addressed through a combination of demining and awareness programmes (see para. 26 above). In order effectively to meet these and other challenges, the United Nations country teams in both countries will continue to work closely with the relevant authorities and with UNMEE.

30. Joint government-United Nations needs assessments have already been undertaken in both Ethiopia and Eritrea and will culminate in the launching of government and United Nations country team appeals at the end of January 2001. Target populations for continued humanitarian assistance in 2001 include internally displaced persons who remain

in camps, rural groups and urban populations made vulnerable by the effects of war and drought.

VI. Financial aspects

31. The Mission is at present operating on a commitment authority of $150 million recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and subsequently approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/237 of 23 December 2000. The current funding allocation is expected to meet UNMEE start-up costs and ongoing operational requirements. The proposed budget for the establishment and operation of the Mission for the period 31 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 amounts to $190,699,200 gross and the net requirements amount to $188,202,600. Both ACABQ and the Fifth Committee intend to review further the resource requirements, including the staffing structure of UNMEE, during the resumed fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly in February/March 2001.

VII. Observations

32. The signing at Algiers of the 12 December Peace Agreement constituted a major achievement, which underlines the commitment of both countries to the consolidation of the peace process. I am encouraged by the fact that the parties have already taken steps towards the implementation of some of their commitments under the Agreement and I call upon them to comply with it fully and without undue delay. I should like to reiterate that, in this effort, the United Nations stands ready to work closely with the Eritrean and Ethiopian authorities, the OAU and others concerned. I am confident that Member States will be prepared to provide the two parties and the United Nations with all necessary assistance to this end.

33. The 12 December Agreement requests the parties to respect and implement fully the provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities of 18 June 2000. I am pleased by the rapid deployment of UNMEE. It is expected that this process will be completed in the coming weeks and that it will create conditions conducive to a durable peace. However, the delay in the establishment of the Temporary Security Zone, due to disagreements between the parties over the redeployment plans during the second meeting of the Military Coordination Committee, is a source of concern. In this connection, it should be emphasized that the redeployment is an operational requirement meant to avert the risk of incidents between the troops facing each other on the ground. The redeployment will in no way prejudge the final status of the contested areas. My Special Representative has been asked to work with the parties to ensure that these disagreements are resolved as soon as possible.

34. A few matters pertaining to UNMEE's deployment also remain to be resolved. In this regard, it would be essential that the Governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia agree to sign the status-of-forces agreements without any further delay.

35. Mines and unexploded ordnance remain the pre-eminent threat to the UNMEE troops and the population in and around the future Temporary Security Zone. It is hoped that the international community will generously support non-governmental organizations with the resources, skills and expertise in demining so that, in coordination with UNMEE and the United Nations country teams, they can assist both Governments with this major undertaking. Accordingly, I urge the international community to increase its support for demining activities and mine-awareness programmes in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

36. The work of the Boundary Commission entrusted by the 12 December Agreement with the delimitation and demarcation of the border, is particularly relevant to the mandate of UNMEE. I trust that the parties will work constructively towards establishing the Commission within the timeframe set in the Agreement and that they will facilitate its work and respect its decisions.

37. The success of the Boundary Commission, however, will require that its work be put on a solid financial footing. Under the Agreement, the parties agreed to bear equally the expenses of the Commission. It is expected therefore that they will provide the required financing for the Commission as soon as possible. The Agreement also states that the Commission may accept donations from the United Nations Trust Fund established under paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 1177 (1998) of 26 June 1998. As at 10 January, voluntary contributions to this Trust Fund total $1.7 million, and I wish to express appreciation to those Member States that have contributed to it. However, although a budget for the

work of the Commission will be prepared by the Commission itself, the resources currently available in the Trust Fund are clearly inadequate to meet the expenses of the Commission. I therefore appeal to Member States to make generous contributions to the voluntary Trust Fund.

38. Subject to the availability of the resources, the United Nations will be ready to assist in the work of the Boundary Commission. Under the 12 December Agreement, the United Nations Cartographer is to serve as Secretary of the Commission. In addition, the Commission may require on-site logistical support from UNMEE. To facilitate the early start-up of the Commission, it is advisable that the costs related to the work of the Secretary of the Commission, as well as any support that the Commission may require in the field, be included in UNMEE's budget. Depending on the future requirements of the Commission, I may revert to the Security Council and other competent United Nations bodies concerning the financing of this important organ.

39. While attending the signing ceremony of the 12 December Agreement at Algiers, I took note of President Afwerki's statement to the effect that Eritrea and Ethiopia were not condemned but rather blessed to live as neighbours. At the same ceremony, Prime Minister Zenawi stated that the Agreement had paved the way for the two countries to "wage the real war against poverty". Regrettably, since then, a war of words has continued in the media, and to some extent in official statements on both sides. At Algiers, I told both leaders that it is not enough to silence the guns, but that their countries must embrace peace, build trust and work for genuine reconciliation. The international community expects both countries to continue to work resolutely towards these goals.

40. Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to my Special Representative and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNMEE for their devoted efforts towards the quest for peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea: contributions as at 10 January 2001[a]

	UNMO	Troops	HQ	Total
Algeria	8			8
Argentina			1	1
Austria	3		5	8
Bangladesh	6		4	10
Benin			2	2
Canada	6	536[b]	8	550[b]
China	5			5
Denmark		324[b]	7	331[b]
Finland	7		2	9
France			2	2
Ghana	9		7	16
India	5		2	7
Italy	5	113	6	124
Jordan	5	939[b]	12	956[b]
Kenya	9		12	21
Malaysia	6		5	11
Nepal	4			4
Netherlands	1	1 104[b]	9	1 114[b]
Nigeria	3			3
Norway	4		4	8
Peru	2			2
Poland	5		6	11
Romania	8			8
Russian Federation	2			2
Slovakia		153	4	157
South Africa	1		2	3
Spain	3		1	4
Sweden	8		5	13
Switzerland	3			3
Tanzania, United Republic of	8		3	11
Tunisia	1			1
Ukraine	5			5
Uruguay	5			5

	UNMO	*Troops*	*HQ*	*Total*
United States of America	6		1	7
Zambia	10			10
Total	**153**	**3 169**[b]	**110**	**3 432**[b]

[a] The following additional countries have committed themselves to send United Nations Military Observers and/or troops: Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, the Gambia, Greece, Namibia, New Zealand, Paraguay, Singapore.

[b] Includes National Support Element (NSE).